

Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Sail Loft
(Building No. 55)
Near State Highway 37
Vallejo
Solano County
California

HAER No. CA-3-C

HAER
CAL,
48-MARI,
1-H-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

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Location: Southwest of and across Mare Island strait from the city of Vallejo, Solano County, California, and 1.5 miles Southeast of State Highway 37, where it bridges the Napa River.
UTM: 0564100-4217000
Quad: Mare Island

Date of Construction: 1854-1855

Present Owner: United States Navy
Mare Island Naval Shipyard
Vallejo, California 94592

Present Use: Naval Shipyard

Significance: Mare Island was established by Commander (later Admiral) David Glasgow Farragut as the first Naval base in California. Building No. 55 was a prime example of an industrial building constructed by the U.S. Navy in the 19th Century.

History

(For a general history of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, see HAER No. CA-3)

Building 55 was built in 1855. This building was constructed on native soil which is generally a sandy-silt underlain by sandstone and siltstone rock, and were located on a relatively flat area bordering Mare Island Strait and located at the base of a hill.

This structure was built under the direction of Abraham Powell, Jr., Master Carpenter and Joiner, and Mr. Warner, Master Mason, of brick from a tile works in Contra Costa County, California. The structure was two stories high, 400 feet long, and 60 feet wide. The building was built with solid timber trusses spanning the brick side walls with 1- 1/8 inch straight sheathing supporting a slate roof. The slate tiles were brought to Mare Island from New Bedford, Connecticut, or Boston, Massachusetts. There is a mezzanine floor, which was built later, between the first and second floors in the north third of the building. The truss design can be seen in enclosure 1. Brick cornices supported the gutters, which were rectangular copper conduits which served to collect rainwater to augment the water supply.

Building 55 housed a sail loft on the second floor, and a Public Works Office on the lower floor. The lower floor was also used as a Pattern Shop for all of Mare Island's ship

construction and foundry work until the construction of the present Pattern Shop in the late 1930's.

This building was used until late 1978 in support of the Shipyard's mission, and has seen the construction of 513 naval crafts. These crafts span the range from sailing vessels through coal and oil-burning ships all the way to the nuclear powered vessels of today.

Sources:

- 1) Lott, Arnold S., A Long Line of Ships, Annapolis, 1954.
- 2) Lemmon, Sue & Witchels, E.D., Sidewheelers to Nuclear Power, Annapolis, 1977.
- 3) Wichels, E.D., Draft history of Buildings 51, 53, & 55, 1978.
- 4) Grapevine Articles, various dates.

